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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001553

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR DAS BRYZA, EUR/SE, EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/27/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#) [RU](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY SUPPORTS GEORGIA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY; CONCERNED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS

REF: A. SECSTATE 91894

[B](#). BAKU 796

[C](#). TBILISI 1472

Classified By: Political Counselor Daniel J. O'Grady, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#). (C) We delivered ref A points to MFA South Caucasus Department Head Firat Sunel, urging a clear statement rejecting Russia's recognition of Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence. Sunel noted the August 26 MFA statement (see paragraph 6), calling it a short but clear message of concern, and said the GOT has no plans to issue additional statements on Georgia at this time.

[2](#). (C) Sunel confirmed that Russian FM Lavrov will visit Turkey September 2 (perhaps arriving September 1 evening) to discuss Turkey's proposed "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" and related matters, including President Medvedev's August 26 announcement. The GOT, he said, is still working on what message to convey to Lavrov. The Russians are clearly interested in the Turkish proposal and the initiative was reportedly well-received by the Azerbaijanis, what little was conveyed to them (ref B). Sunel said he did not know whether President Gul intended to accept Armenian President Sargsyan's invitation to attend the soccer match in Yerevan September 6, where they could presumably discuss the Turkish proposal. (NOTE: Turkish media has reported Turkey intends to hold bilateral discussions with Armenia in New York during UNGA meetings in September. END NOTE.) It was too soon for Sunel to suggest how the Medvedev announcement would impact Georgia's participation in the platform, though he recognized the obvious complications. (NOTE: The Georgians have told the Turks they will not participate without a full Russian withdrawal, and comments by Georgian DFM Vashadze reported ref C indicate that the GOG intends to sever all diplomatic ties with Russia. END NOTE.) MFA Deputy U/S for Russia, South Caucasus and Central Asia Cevikoz, just returning from Moscow August 26, where he met with his Russian counterpart, plans to brief foreign Ambassadors on his visit and on the proposed Turkish Caucasus stability platform August 28.

TURKISH MEDIA FRET "NEW COLD WAR"

[3](#). (U) The Turkish press reports with concern a "new Cold War" and stresses the risks to Turkey from heightened instability in the region. Direct criticism of the Medvedev announcement, however, is limited. Ismet Berkin, writing in liberal "Radikal" pointed out the hypocrisy of Russia recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after brutally suppressing the same aspirations in Chechnya, and predicted that South Ossetia would soon join the Russian Federation and that Abkhazia would be under complete Russian control. Sinan Ogan, writing in pro-government, Islamist "Zaman" surmised that Turkey's stability platform proposal has been weakened by Medvedev's announcement, but argued that Turkey should remain impartial between Russia and the West in order to contribute to resolving these crises.

ETHNIC ABKHAZ AND CIRCASSIAN NGOS LOBBYING
FOR TURKISH RECOGNITION OF ABKHAZ INDEPENDENCE

¶4. (C) Turkey's large Abkhaz "diaspora" and ethnic Circassian community celebrated Russia's recognition of Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence and have already begun urging the GOT to also recognize these territories' independence, especially Abkhazia. Eurasian Strategic Research Center (ASAM) Caucasus Senior Researcher and media commentator Hasan Kanbolat told us August 27 that he expects Moscow, in the coming months, to begin pressuring the Abkhaz and South Ossetian parliaments to vote for accession to Russia. (He likened this process to Turkey's own machinations in 1938-39, when it successfully pressured the parliament of the short-lived Hatay Republic to vote for accession to Turkey.) South Ossetia's independence, he said, is a lost cause; it will soon opt to accede to Russia. Abkhazia, however, desires relations with the West, and believes it can best achieve these through Turkey, with whom it shares a cultural bond via the large Abkhaz "diaspora" and the millions of Turks -- many affluent and well-placed in society -- who claim Abkhaz and Circassian heritage. Turkey, MFA estimates, is home to four times as many Abkhaz as Abkhazia, and two Abkhaz parliamentarians are reportedly Turkish citizens.

¶5. (C) Kanbolat urged that the United States and Turkey immediately recognize Abkhaz independence and move quickly to engage Sukhumi in order to ensure a Euro-Atlantic character for Abkhazia. Moscow's annexation of Abkhazia, he stressed, would double Russia's Black Sea coastline, constituting a major strategic threat for Turkey and the West. The GOT has long wished to engage Abkhazia more actively in order to

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strengthen Abkhazia's western orientation, but largely held back at Tbilisi's behest, canceling, for example, a number of planned unofficial visits to Turkey by Abkhaz "President" Bagapsh. Kanbolat argued strongly that Turkey should no longer be restrained by what he called the "non-existing territorial integrity" of Georgia. Asked if he believed Turkey would alter its self-censored approach toward Abkhazia now that Russia recognized Abkhaz independence, Kanbolat suggested yes. Turkey's AKP government neglected the Caucasus since coming to office, failing to apply the same creative energy to the region it applied in the Middle East. But the Caucasus are a priority now; the proposed "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" is already evidence of fresh thinking, he said.

MFA PRESS RELEASE

¶6. (U) NO-158, August 26, 2008 (OFFICIAL TRANSLATION)

BEGIN TEXT:

Turkey attaches importance to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and is highly concerned about recent developments.

Turkey is of the opinion that this conflict should be resolved through peaceful means.

END TEXT.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>

WILSON